

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SAM-01 IO-13 A-01 OPR-02 OC-06

CCO-00 SY-05 USSS-00 OMB-01 SCCT-01 EB-07 COME-00

NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /100 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 71

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

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COMSIXTHFLT

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CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7055

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION AUG 24

REF: BEIRUT 7033

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1. SUMMARY: HOUGHTON-MACK MISSION ENDS. ARTILLERY BARRAGES CONTINUE IN BEIRUT, AS WELL AS SOME GROUND ACTION. UNCONFIRMED REPORT OF CHRISTIAN OFFENSIVE INTENTIONS IN AREA SOUTH OF CITY EAST OF BEIRUT AIRPORT, AND IN CENTER OF CITY. HEAVY FIGHTING REPORTED IN TRIPOLI AREA IN LAST FEW DAYS, BUT NOW CLEAR THAT CHRISTIAN ATTACK ON ALMA WAS REPELLED. METN STILL AN ARTILLERY SHOW. PRESS SPECULATES SARKIS EFFECTIVENESS AS PRESIDENT WILL DEPEND HEAVILY ON SYRIAN MILITARY SUPPORT AND AMERICAN AND FRENCH DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT. CONTINUED RUMORS OF MAJOR SYRIAN MILITARY ACTION IN LEBANON IN SEPTEMBER. PALESTINIANS AND SYRIANS DEBATE HOW TO IMPLEMENT JULY 29 ACCORD. AL DEPUTY KHOLI EXPECTED IN BEIRUT AUG 24. END SUMMARY.

2. HOUGHTON-MACK MISSION. US DIPLOMATIC OFFICERS HOUGHTON AND MACK MET AUG 23 WITH PRESIDENT FRANGIE AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN, AS WELL AS PIERRE GEMAYEL, MARONITE PATRIARCH KHURAYSH, AND OTHERS. SOME NEWSPAPERS SPECULATE ABOUT PRUPOSES OF VISIT, BUT PRESS GENERALLY GIVES PROMINENCE TO FACT-FINDING PURPOSE OF MISSION, AS STRESSED BY HOUGHTON AND MACK. THEY DEPARTED JOUNIEH FOR CYPRUS AUG 24 (SEPTELS).

3. GROUND SITUATION. BEIRUT AREA. INTENSE ARTILLERY EXCHANGES CONTINUE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT, AS CAMILLE CHAMOUN JOINS CHORUS OF THOSE CALLING FOR A HALT. GROUND ACTION IN SEVERAL PLACES ALONG CONFRONTATION LINE, NOTABLY IN AREA OF KAHNDAQ AL GHAMIQ AND DAMASCUS ROAD, WHERE PALESTINIANS/LEFTISTS SAY THEY REPELLED CHRISTIAN ASSAULT. INTENSE ARTILLERY FIRE ALSO IN AREA OF KFARSHIMA, DUE EAST OF BEIRUT AIRPORT. ONE RIGHTIST SOURCE SAYS KFARSHIMA HAS BEEN DECLARED "MILITARY ZONE" AND THAT CHRISTIANS PLAN OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN AREA. ANOTHER CHRISTIAN SOURCE SAYS CHRISTIANS PLAN TO TAKE OVER AREA OF SURETE GENERALE WEST AND NORTH OF MUSEUM CHECKPOINT. UNIDENTIFIED ELEMENTS ATTEMPTED UNSUCCESSFULLY ASSASSINATE MARONITE PRIEST IN HIS HOME IN MAZRAA AREA IN WEST BEIRUT.

4. NORTH. L'ORIENT CHARACTERIZES RECENT FIGHTING ON OUTSKIRTS OF TRIPOLI AS ONE OF PRINCIPAL BATTLES OF THE WAR. IT NOW CLEAR THAT CHRISTIAN FORCES DID ATTEMPT ENTER ALMA AND
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WERE REPELLED. LEFTISTS SAY THEY ALLOWED CHRISTIANS INITIALLY TO ENTER VILLAGE IN ORDER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ENSUING STREET FIGHTING CONDITIONS, THEN DROVE THEM OUT. CHAMOUN SAID AUG 23 THAT CHRISTIANS WITHDREW VOLUNTARILY IN RETURN FOR RELEASE OF REMAINS OF A CHRISTIAN OFFICER. INTENSE ARTILLERY FIRE CONTINUES IN AREA.

5. ELSEWHERE IN LEBANON. METN CAMPAIGN HAS STILL NOT

STARTED, AND MAY BE DELAYED UNTIL SYRIANS READY TO LEND SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE, BUT HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE AND CONCENTRATIONS OF CHRISTIANS IN AREA CONTINUE. IN SOUTH, SYRIAN ARTILLERY FIRE AGAINST VILLAGES OF ROUM AND ZAOUR.

6. SARKIS ASSUMPTION OF PRESIDENCY. L'ORIENT AUG 24, COMMENTING ON PERSPECTIVE OF SARKIS ENTOURAGE, SAYS THAT HE WILL RELY ON SYRIAN MILITARY SUPPORT, AND AMERICAN AND FRENCH DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT TO OPERATE EFFECTIVELY. SARKIS HAS ACCEPTED INVITATION TO VISIT DAMASCUS. HE IS EXPECTED ATTEMPT TO ORGANIZE BROAD GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, INCLUDING TRADITIONAL LEADERS, NEW LEADERS WHO HAVE EMERGED IN COURSE OF WAR, AND TECHNOCRATS. SOURCES BELIEVE THAT SYRIANS WILL UNDERTAKE LARGE SCALE MILITARY OPERATIONS, INCLUDING USE OF AIR POWER, IF PALESTINIANS DO NOT BEGIN TO HONOR JULY 29 SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN ACCORD BY SPET 5. SYRIANS DEMAND THAT, IN FIRST INSTANCE, PALESTINIANS ABANDON POSITIONS IN HIGH METN.

7. PALESTINIAN/SYRIAN RELATIONS. IN REPORT ON MEETING BETWEEN SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM AND PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES ABU MAZIN AND ABU MAHIR IN DAMASCUS AUG 22, AL-MUHARRIR SAYS THAT SYRIA DEMANDED (1) PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM MOUNTAINS; (2) CESSATION OF PROPAGANDA ATTACKS AGAINST SYRIA; (3) PARTICIPATION OF PRO-SYRIAN LEFTIST LEBANESE ELEMENTS IN NEGOTIATIONS; AND (4) FORMATION OF QUADRIPARTITE CEASEFIRE COMMITTEE. PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP IN BEIRUT MET AUG 23 AND REPORTEDLY TOOK FOLLOWING POSITIONS IN RESPONSE TO SYRIAN DEMANDS: (1) NO WITHDRAWAL FROM MOUNTAINS WITHOUT CONCESSIONS BY OTHER SIDE; (2) PALESTINIANS ALREADY HAVE STOPPED PROPAGANDA ATTACKS ON SYRIA; (3) PARTICIPATION BY PRO-SYRIAN LEBANESE LEFTISTS WAS NOT PROVIDED FOR IN JULY 29 AGREEMENT, AND IS PREMATURE; AND CONFIDENTIAL

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(4) SYRIA, NOT PLO, HAS OBSTRUCTED CONVENING OF QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE. SYRIAN MILITARY AIRCRAFT LANDED AUG 23 AT BEIRUT AIRPORT AFTER SYRIAN AL FORCES HAD SECURED AREA, AND REPORTEDLY DISCHARGED MOHAMMED DOUGHMANE AND OTHER SAIQA REPRESENTATIVES.

8. ARAB LEAGUE. AL DEPUTY KHOLI EXPECTED AUG 24 IN BEIRUT. AN-NAHAR SAYS THAT PLO AND JUNBLATTI NATIONAL MOVEMENT FIND PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS ACCEPTABLE AS LEBANESE REPRESENTATIVE TO ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT MEETING. LIBYAN REPRESENTATIVE DOURDAH DEPARTED DAMASCUS AUG 23 FOR LIBYA AFTER SEEING SYRIAN FONMIN KHADDAM, MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADBEL KARIM ALI AND CHIEF OF OPERATIONS OFFICE SALAM-KHAYYAS.

9. LEBANESE POLITICAL NOTES. PHALANGIST RADIO SAYS
PRESIDENT FRANGIE AND FRENCH AMBASSADOR ARGOD AUG 23 DISCUSSED
POSSIBILITY OF FRENCH FORCES IN LEBANON. SUPPOSEDLY, FRENCH
FORCES WOULD FUNCTION JOINTLY WITH SYRIANS. FRENCH COUNSELOR
DENIES HIS GOVT IS CONSIDERING SENDING TROOPS. CAMILLE
CHAMOUN, IN LENGTHY PRESS CONFERENCE, CALLED DEAN BROWN A
"LIAR" IF HE DOES INDEED ASSERT THAT ISRAELIS HAVE PROVIDED
ARMS TO MARONITES. HE ALSO REASSERTED CONSTITUTIONALITY OF
HIS APPOINTMENT AS FOREIGN MINISTER BY FRANGIE. WE HEAR
THAT JUNBLATT'S EFFORT RAISE POPULAR ARMY CONTINUES GENERALLY
UNSUCCESSFUL, AND THAT POPULATION OF DRUZE AREA WHERE HE
ATTEMPTING SET UP LOCAL ADMINISTRATION RESENTS APPEARANCE OF
BEIRUTI COMMUNISTS AND OTHER LEFTISTS IN OFFICES SO FAR
ESTABLISHED.
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